

What have we become?

Now Luke, you may say, what do you mean by that? Are you talking personally? Corporately? Nationally? Humanly? Spiritually? Well the answer to that is very simple. Yes. What have we become? Who have we become is just as appropriate as what. Thousands of abortions a year. Violence in our streets, schools, and in our very homes. Pornography and expressions of filth are accepted more and more readily, not merely in our society, in our schools and in public, but our homes. What was once a man's castle has been compromised; now being torn and corrupted from within. If I was merely speaking of the secular world, then this message would have no place upon this site. It pains me, but I am speaking of a great many Christians.

We have become complacent. I will put this question to you in several different ways. The atmosphere of the somewhat anonymity of the internet makes this easier for me, I am not a little ashamed to admit. I want to ask this question of you and it is easier for you to answer since I may not know you and even if I did this is a private question meant to make you reflect rather than respond. Though I would not mind a response, of course.

This is my query and it is directed more to the believer than the nonbeliever. If I were a pastor and I came to your home and knocked on your door, how would you react? Easy right? Hey Pastor Luke! How are you! You would be friendly. Most believers would. Now the first hard question. What are your thoughts? Are you thinking, *What is he doing here? Should I let him in? Or should I stand here and talk to him and let him speak. Maybe he is just here to talk to me about the potluck on Sunday.*

Then I do what 90% of us dread. I say, May I come in for a few moments? Now what are your thoughts. At first it is probably a series of very innocent hesitations. *My hair is awful. The dishes haven't been done for two days! The children are wild!* But what can you say? Thoughts of what everybody would say if you shunned the pastor? So you let me in. As we enter, you very graciously offer me a chair, and you flip the swimsuit edition over on the end table when I glance towards the chair opposite it. As I settle in and am admiring your interior decorating skills, you cast surreptitious looks about the room as well, settling on the titles on the bookshelf. You suppress the wince of course because after all you don't want me to see there may be something wrong. You wish I had called ahead so you could remove the romance novels (which I have plenty to say about but I will spare you for now) and turn the titles of the horror and other not so Christian DVDs backwards on the shelf next to the family shrine (I have plenty to say about TV too).¹

¹ Joshua chapter 7 reveals God's position on hiding our sins.

Now I have nearly everybody who reads this either indignant that I would suggest anything amoral or upset that I have pointed it out. I heard a pastor say once, and it is sad but very true. What was once unacceptable in the homes of our unbelieving fathers is now commonplace in the home of so called believers today. The lines between right and wrong have been blurred and the Body of Christ has been more guilty than the rest of the world in this regard. We should know better.² We preach tolerance now. That is the rule of the day. Judge not lest ye be judged. Josh McDowell has preached on this subject to much degree and more detail so I refer you to his teachings. He says it much better than I by far.

How many of us with children even pay attention to what our children are taught in school? We have turned over our children to those who do not have their salvation in mind. Is your child's salvation first and foremost on your mind? In what regard to these two paths, do you place more importance on? When your child came home from school what did you ask them? "What did you learn today son?" Instead should we not ask, "Son, how did you serve our Lord today?" I am no different. In fact I am fairly sure that I have not asked my children that question. Should we not today? I will tell you this, I will be doing so now. Our focus is now more on our child's scores in Algebra, than how well they can recite their memory verses that they learned last week.

Schools today are not evil in and of themselves. There are many, many good teachers out there, in fact the majority are. But our education system is determined, unfortunately by numbers. Numbers are first and foremost; that's how schools are even able to function. If there are no numbers, no little feet running, ahem, walking up the school's halls, then there is no money. Without money there is no school. That is how it works.

How does this relate to the subject at hand? It is no rabbit trail. It is an example of our complacency. We have taken as Christians, to complain about the schools trampling our rights as Christians. They won't allow the Ten Commandments. They won't allow public prayer. They won't allow Jesus name to be praised within their walls. Why does this bother you? You send them there. We blame the schools for brainwashing our children; because somehow keeping them from seeing, reading, or hearing God's laws, His word, will somehow remove God's laws, His word from our childrens' hearts.

If that is what you think then I ask you this question. Why haven't you put God's laws, God's word there in your child's heart?³ We increasingly depend on the schools to enforce discipline. Keep our children in line. We expect them to teach our children morals. They are a

² Isaiah 59:12; 1 John 3:4-10; James 5:16

³ Psalm 78:1-8

secular institution for the most part. Why not use Snoop Dog or the local MS 13 gang leader to teach some morals? Many parents do. Many do not even know what their children even listen to. Or where they go with their friends. What they play on the Xbox. I once spoke to a teacher who said they had bought their son a video game called Grand Theft Auto 3. The name did not cause them concern apparently, but when I told them what was in the game, that changed their perspective on it. Why did they not find out first?

This is not a criticism of our schools. This is a criticism of us as parents for turning our children over to people who do not believe in the importance of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If my boy doesn't practice his memory verses, well he'll grow into it. If he is failing Science he is grounded.

This is merely one example of where we have gone wrong. Our children can not be expected to believe in a 6,000 year earth when confronted with the seemingly reasonable theory of evolution from primordial slime if we have not instructed them of the truth before hand. They should be able to, from the teaching of us, their parents, to have the faith, the knowledge, to say if not aloud than in their hearts, LIE! When confronted with the misguided teachings of the secular world. The world does what it knows. We do too. We know and it is our job to know better and we have to stop blaming the world for leading our young children astray. The Pied Piper could never had led the children away from the village if their parents had put cotton in their ears first.⁴ The devil has no other purpose but to steal, kill, and destroy. Did you think he would not try? Did you think he would not use every means at his disposal?

We teach tolerance in our churches. In our devotions one night not long ago, I read this verse. Ezekiel 20:39. *As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.*

Jesus said to John in Revelation that He detested lukewarm worship. I would that you were hot or cold. Then He says that it makes Him sick.⁵ What God hates we should hate.⁶ At the writing of this article it is the day before the Super Bowl. I see more enthusiasm about the 49ers and the Ravens than I do about what Pastor is preaching this Sunday. We have OUR teams. What about OUR God?

Gandhi was once asked what was the biggest impediment to the growth of Christianity in India. His answer? He replied with one word. Christians. We do as Christians, tend to think of

⁴ Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 29:17; Proverbs 22:6

⁵ Revelation 3:14-22

⁶ Proverb 8:13

people as us and them. That is true to much of an extent but when you can't discern the difference between us and them? Then what? How many battles are fought between churches of different denominations, and between denominational churches and nondenominational churches? Between established churches and "home-based" worship ministries. As if there should be a difference. One says "if it doesn't happen in the church building, then it doesn't happen." The other says that "There is so much bad happening in the church we don't want anything to do with it." Well they are both wrong. They are both right.

We are not to forsake the fellowship of believers. That is the danger of a home-based ministry. It limits the congregation. That is not what God wants. I have heard it said so many times. I don't want to do the church game. I want take us back to the days of the early church where they should be. Let us not forget however, Jesus had a lot to say to John about troubles of the early church. They did not have everything hunky dory all the time either. This may be a rabbit trail here so I won't go further into it from here. Still, I want you to read these verses out of Hebrews. Mull this paragraph over a bit.

Hebrews 10:18-29 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Sobering isn't it? This passage, as far as I am concerned settles the debate about Fellowship with the rest of the Body of Christ, baptism, and declaring Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives, ie. being saved. If you read this and are upset with me please remember that I did not write this. Please take it up with the author. Seriously why are you upset? God's word is truth. Too many churches preach on God's grace without spending at the very least, an equal amount of time on repentance. I recently heard a message delivered from our current pastor, where he

said something that really got to me. He said it is impossible to truly understand and take seriously God's grace, unless you understand and take seriously your sin. If I have misquoted him I take full responsibility for doing so. I have the heart of it however.

It comes down not really to what we have become but who we are and what the Body of Christ has become. We are what we are. What we are is what defines the Body of Christ. So what are we? Well I have given this much thought and I would like to share it with you. This is the meat of the message that has come to me and really why I have begun this page.

For a year and a half I preached at a small church in SD. Technically I was a fill in pastor until one could be sent from headquarters. A word on this. I struggled to preach for as long as I considered my self a part timer or a fill in. There is no such thing. You either are or you aren't. There is no part time anything in the Body of Christ.⁷ We don't have a part time God nor does He consider any of His flock part time servants. The trouble begins when His flock considers themselves to be so.

I will probably have a message on who a preacher is at some time in the future. I learned a great deal on who I was and who God is. It is a wonderful aid to your walk in Christ and a good reason to get your nose in God's word when you have to have a message every Sunday. It is daunting when you take into account that you are doubly responsible for what you teach. We are held to account for what we teach.⁸ Heaven help us when we are mistaken and put stumbling blocks in the path of our brethren.

God was always faithful⁹ and from June of 2011 to November of 2012, He never once left me without a message for our small congregation. Then the church received a new pastor. This pastor and his wife had a ministry that they were called to the area for. This church no longer suited the needs of my family for it was aimed at a certain demographic instead. This is no rebuke on the new pastor at all, in fact please take a moment to pray for their ministry, blessings and revival to the area.

For me, though not in bitterness, it was a hard change. I no longer had to give a message every week and it left a big empty hole in my spiritual walk. I suddenly had a hard time getting into the word as often as I should. Sure, we have our family devotions every night. I had devotions with my wife as well. We found a church across town where we were made to feel very welcome indeed. But I still had this hole and I struggled to fill it. I knew what the problem was. I just felt dry.

⁷ Deuteronomy 11:13; Joshua 22:5; 1 Samuel 12:20-24; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:37; Joel 2:12; Jeremiah 29:10-14

⁸ Ezekiel 34:8-10/James 3:1

⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:9/Deuteronomy 7:9

One day my wife was gone to an appointment and I was home alone with the children and I got a message. No other way to describe it. It is the way it usually was when I was preaching; one second I was thinking and then...Bang. It was in my head. But now I had a message, but no congregation to give it to. What to do? I thought about it for a month or so and was still puzzled. Then I was talking with my mother in law and told her it was funny. I had a message and nobody to preach it to. She shrugged and said, "Well put it on the internet or something." She was right. From there the idea to put this message on the net was in my head. So enough history right? How does this apply to what is happening to the Body of Christ here in America?

Not a whole lot but I wanted to tell how this message came about. What we have become is who we are. So what are we? Well first we are people. And there as I see it, are five types of people. I suppose you could say four really but I will explain in a moment. I will compare us to, for sake of argument, people to the military.

The first type of person I will call the civilians. These people are your basic nonbelievers. Atheists, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, devil worshipers, what have you. On the fringes of this there is a group that could really be considered the fifth group and I would treat them so. These are your agnostic and as John Wesley aptly named them, almost-Christians. These are those who possess enough knowledge to know that what they are doing is not enough and that there is a better life to be had, but are not quite brave enough to join or willing to do what it takes to get there. Like Agrippa when he told Paul, "Almost thou hast persuaded me to become a Christian." When trouble or attackers come, to equate this to our military comparison, these flee and run. Or stand around and deny that there is danger; that there is a battle being waged around them. We then have a new name for them...casualties.

The second type of person has joined our army but refuses to participate in the battle. They mill around the fort, with no thought of the enemy at all. Conscientious objectors you may say. Until the enemy attacks. Then they run for the bunker and hunker down. They had no use for it and did not keep adequate maintenance on the bunker until they needed it. But now that they do they hunker down and pray that the bunker will shelter them from danger. They do not even know how to operate the defenses. They hope that the walls alone will protect them from the enemy. An enemy that is strong and experienced.

Now another history lesson. Have you ever heard of the Maginot line? It was in France, built sometime between the first War to End All Wars and World War 2. It was a massive series of bunkers and walls separating France from the Rhineland stretching for some five hundred

miles! You see the Rhineland was once part of Germany and France was always distrustful of Germany. They figured Germany would want it back and would one day try to take it back. This is like the enemy, our enemy, the devil. You see, we Christians were once his territory. He had us under his control before we were Christians. Then God took us from him. Someday he will attack and try to take us back. In fact he hasn't stopped. Anyway, this series of forts and bunkers was truly awesome. It was the most extensive battle line of fortifications ever built. It stretched for much of the entire length of the border of the Rhineland.

It was actually supposed to be built along the entire eastern border, but due to funds shortage, for huge fortress building enterprises are generally expensive and the idea that Belgium was their ally, building was stopped. How often we Christians do not go far enough! We go so far then when the troubles stop we stop. We do not take measures to ensure that it doesn't happen again or if the first wave of attackers is repulsed, to prepare for a second attack. This will come to play again shortly in this analogy.

This bunker had all sorts of nifty gadgets too. Rail systems, state of the art medical facilities, and a special communication system that was hard wired into the main command post. Its walls were twenty feet thick. It had lookout towers that had something in the order of eight inch thick steel armor plating. It had lots of cannon turrets that were on lifts that would move up and down below the earths surface to hide from enemy fire. It had many gun emplacements that covered the Rhineland for miles in front of them. It could house thousands of soldiers for long periods of time in the hundreds of miles of tunnels under it.

Impregnable right? That is what the French thought. There was one problem. Well quiet a few problems actually. Problem with the special communications. They were never actually hooked up. They were there. But they used civilian phone lines. The twenty foot thick walls? Well, this was the trouble with the entire engineering of the whole Maginot Line. It was borne of the trench warfare of the first World War. Trenches for miles and miles. It didn't take into account that the technology had changed. The walls in the front of the bunkers were twenty feet thick sure. Impregnable. But the back of the bunkers only had four to five feet thick walls. You see in the first World War the French had a fort, I gather it was large and tough. It was taken by the Germans and the French lost a lot of soldiers trying to get it back so they figured to make it easier to take the bunkers back by making part of it weaker. They assumed that it it was possible to lose them.

The lookout towers with thick armor plating? They were actually like giant bells. They were cramped. Even more inconvenient they did little to protect from the twenty millimeter guns the Germans had. The giant gun turrets? Limited and loud as I understand it. The

bunkers were cold and damp. The sewers were not properly ventilated. There were more insidious troubles than these. Two in particular.

The first was the political situation in France. The army was in trouble. The country was in danger of collapsing politically and financially. The second was even more bothersome. When France built the bunkers they used local help. From the Rhineland. A student of history knows that Germany merely marched in and took the Rhineland. France did nothing to stop them. This was the policy of appeasement. It was prevalent of the policies of the day in Europe and indeed the whole world. France could have stopped them easily. The German generals of the day freely admitted it. They chose not to. The French compromised, as did everybody else when they could have stopped Hitler. They did nothing when he took Austria. They gave Czechoslovakia to him without a fight. Indeed they had a treaty to aid should he attack and they capitulated and even forbid Czechoslovakia to defend herself. They gave that country to Hitler and did not even ask the small country if it was ok with them. France had one hundred divisions of soldiers. Czechoslovakia had thirty seven divisions and their own Maginot type line that Germany could not have possibly defeated. Germany had seven divisions. Seven. The Allies still said no to war. How like that we are as Christians today. We have the power to stop the devil in his tracks and we do not.¹⁰ Back to the message. All the Rhineland workers and engineers, the locals the French used to build the impregnable line of defense still lived there. Who was then a valuable commodity to the enemy?

Poland too, wanted a piece of Czechoslovakia, and did nothing to protect her. They had a treaty with France and England as well. Hitler defeated Poland and nobody came to her aid. Nobody could. So why were they surprised? They forsook their treaties so of what worth are those they still hold? Over history there are lots of broken treaties and the fruit is in the mix. Nobody can trust them. It is OK when it happens to somebody else. It is when it happens to us that makes it a crime. Our nation is in the midst of just a situation now. Violence is everywhere and we disarm the people and make it easier for violence to happen. We compromise our means of safety with the promise of safety. A utopian dream with no anchor in reality.

In the end, Germany easily defeated the Maginot line. They went over much of the wall in gliders! It was outdated before it was even begun being built. The powers of Europe defeated themselves by repeatedly refusing to meet evil on the field of battle, instead, relying on threats they had no intention of following through on, and appeasement. This is the modern day church.

We have our Sunday services. Our feel good messages. Rock bands in church. I like

¹⁰ James 4:7

Christian rock bands and I don't have a problem with them in church but that is not why we are there. We have all sorts of traditions and hold them like glue. We think that that will save us from the enemy.¹¹ An enemy that has 6,000 years experience fighting this battle and going around, through, or over these defenses. Here we are of the church not even following the field manual that God has given us, and handing out daisies rather than rifles. These "Bunker" Christians as I will call them are trusting in their front walls to keep them safe and ignoring the neglected rear exits from the enemy that has dropped from the sky behind their lines, taking them by surprise.¹²

Another problem France had was that the reduced birth rate from the First World War had devastated the country. The main effect of that was that France had to pin their hopes on the old, out of shape, and untrained soldiers they had left to them. Sound familiar? They had too many casualties to remain effective.

We, the Church, are like the French were before the Second World War. We have had casualties. And these casualties? Who are they like? Back to the analogy. They are now instruments of the enemy, just like the workers and engineers absorbed into Germany when the Rhineland was reconquered. They are Christians that have fallen from grace and the unrepentant. They are those who are hurt and blame God. They are those whose faith is built upon sandy soil. Also included in this number are those who have been hurt by Christians. Those who have witnessed Christians perpetrating deeds that are for lack of a more accurate term, evil.

Instead of being tended to by their brethren, these casualties have been cast off in many cases. Fallen Christians are thought of in Biblical terms by the rest of us aren't they? We consider them dross. That scum that rises to the top of the silversmith's refining pot to be scooped off. Disgraced pastors, deacons, and others who have been taken in sin, well we all figure that is just God casting off the refuse. So we leave them where they fall. That is not what we are called to do at all. We have accepted too much morality of the world. It is only a white lie right? Right and wrong. Right it is a lie, wrong that you are in any stretch of the imagination right when you do it. I have asked my children when caught lying. What do you call somebody who lies? They have replied to me and I will quote. "A liar, but I am not a liar." I reply to them that the title only applies as long as they are doing it, but when you are talking with a false tongue you are a liar. An adulterous husband is adulterous only as long as he is committing adultery. A pastor is only living in sin as long as he is sinning.

13

My point. We are leaving our casualties laying along the road. A spiritual form of the

¹¹ Jesus spoke of this in Mark chapter 7

¹² Jesus spoke of this in the parable of the seed Luke chapter 8

¹³ Matthew 25:34-46/Luke 17:1-4

philosophy that dictates that every man is out for himself. That self preservation is common in the secular world but is supposed to die when we accepted Christ into our hearts.

Our “bunker” Christian is not equipped to handle the weapons and equipment God has provided for us in our battles against the enemy. These Christians are those who do not put God first in their lives. They do not know how to pray. They do not feel the need to tythe. They do not know God nor do they seek Him. Until they need Him. Sickness and disease. Death and marriage troubles. That trials and tribulation part of the Bible shows up and since they did not know how to glorify God in the times of plenty, they do not now know how to seek Him in times of trouble. This is the point in the battle where the strain is the greatest. This is where the battle lines will break if they are going to.

How many times do we demand that God deliver or prosper us? How often are we confused when there is no answer? What it comes down to is distrust. Distrust and unbelief. We tend to think of our successes as OUR successes and that is a form of distrust. Distrust is a form of unbelief. So when our glass towers crumble; Our jobs leave for China; Our wife leaves us; *Insert your favorite disaster here*, we remember God after forgetting Him for who knows how long. Then we cower in our bunker and wait for God to fight our battle for us.

I once received a word from the Lord about this very thing. I asked the Lord why I was struggling with a particular trouble in my life. I spoke to it in faith. I spoke to what was not as if it was. Still the trouble was there. Confused I asked God why that was. It took me a long time to realize that God was speaking to me. What He told me was this. He answered with a question. Why would He do for me what He has already given me the authority to do myself. I had to move on and in that authority. That is what our Fortress is for.

What is a Bunker or any other fortification for. William Allcorn describes the taking of a fortification thusly: “Any fortification can be taken if the enemy is willing and able to pay the cost. The objective of a fortification is to increase that cost to the level that the enemy is not able to pay.” We have in a lot of ways turned our God into a Maginot line. We are not charging the devil full cost and he is picking off those who are cowering in the bunker, because they were not willing to train, or take up arms to defend themselves and ultimately, stand on God's word. We cannot fulfill the expectations of our God by never straying far from the bunker for fear of conflict.

I have seen the seemingly weak and unassuming, fight fiercely and stand stalwart. I have seen the seemingly mighty and bold, stand down and cringe. Talk means little and even accomplishments mean little. The fight with David was not Goliath's first picnic. The man had

likely defeated more foes than he could count, yet David brought him low. But no battle has ever been won out of a bunker. God gave us the full armor set for a reason and it is not complete without a sword. Use it.¹⁴

Don't be a "bunker" Christian. I would like to point to one of the most often referred to verses in the Bible, which sadly, is one of the most ignored verses in the Bible. Even by those who quote it! This is Revelation 3:14-16 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

You need to be prepared. David did not spend all morning thinking of how he was going to whoop a giant today. He was prepared however. If he did not know how to load his sling, swing it without taking his own eye out, or to let go of one side at the right moment so the stone flew forward rather than back up at his countrymen, how differently would things have turned out? If the prayers that he was undoubtedly was praying on his way out to meet Goliath were the first he had prayed would he have shown the confidence he did? God truly protected David. That is true. David had faith and that faith was not in his ability to chuck rocks.

How did David prepare himself? By equipping himself, yes. I have preached the Boy Scout motto before. I have said of David before, that while he took Goliath out with one stone, he was carrying five. Now in all reality he had those extra stones not for Giant removal purposes but because like any competition shooter will tell you, the real accuracy is not from the shooter, not from the gun, as much as it is the ammunition. I have seen guns that shoot three tenths groups readily, shoot patterns just because the bullets were of poor quality or wrong for the configuration of gun and equipment. David had these five stones because they were perfectly round. Goliath was not likely the first game David had taken with that stone. This is unsupported of course. It is conjecture but I believe it is sound. People of the day would have collected stones suitable for slinging.

Do not wait to pray or seek the Lord until those trials and tribulations come. You know they will. The Bible tells you so. If you believe the Bible is true...as silly as it may seem I want to define what I mean by the Bible being true, because too many pick and choose what truths they wish to believe. By true I mean that everything in the Bible happened just as it says it did. From the seven day creation to Jonah being fish food, to Jesus being the Son of God, being the perfect sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins, dying on the cross, being dead for three days,

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:10-18

rising on the third, bestowing the Holy Spirit on the Disciples, ascending into heaven, making intercession for our sins (Himself and Him alone), sitting at the right hand of the Father, and coming again to judge the quick and the dead.

Anyway, be prepared. Learn. That is how you prepare. Memorize your scripture. You are going into battle. This is your ammunition. Your perfectly round and smooth stone! Resist the devil and he will flee from you. God hath not given a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind, Amen. They will save your life. The part of it that counts anyway. The rest of it we are supposed to die to right?

The next type of person is what I would term as the "infantry" Christian. These while manning the bunker too at times, manage short patrols, and more importantly these are those Christian soldiers who are also willing to stand their ground against the enemy. These are those Christians that are your corner posts every Sunday. They may not volunteer for the next expedition to Honduras to evangelize to the poor, but they will pray in earnest for you when your knee hurts. They are generally your "prayer chain" links. They are akin to the truck drivers, cooks, supply clerks, and what have you in the military, without which it would grind to a halt. There would be few evangelists or missionaries without these "Infantry" Christians. There would be no support and I am not just talking mere financial support. For every evangelist out there there is your little old lady "Infantry" battalion back home praying hard and as well as sending part of their social security checks to keep them going.

They are the teachers that pray over their classrooms before the children arrive in the morning. They are the police officers that pray over the drunkard passed out in the back of the squad car. They are the judge that prays to God before walking to the bench to distribute justice, for the Lord Jesus to guide him to a righteous decision. They are the mother and father that pray for their little girl or boy when they are sent off to college, that they not falter in their faith to the many challenges to it they will find there. They are the pastor who prays on his knees every Sunday that he gives the message that his congregation needs to hear, not what message they want to hear.

You see the pattern here? They are the ones who pray! They pray, in the words of Stan Telchin, like they expect God to hear them and they pray not as if it were a once in a million shot. They may not be looking for somebody to give the Gospel to every day, but you can be sure they carry it with them just in case. I love police officers. They have my respect and gratitude for the service they have dedicated their lives to. Everybody has gifts they have been

given. Police officers are no different. Military personnel too. Many of both of these groups of servicemen are crack shots. Some are not. All carry guns anyway. All have to qualify to shoot and handle firearms any way (Sorry I refuse to call them weapons!). If they (law enforcement) are needed you and I will be grateful for it.

We Christians are no different. Some have a gift of healing. I know the healing comes from God, but it seems as though when some people pray for healing, miraculous healing takes place more often. Some people have visions and dreams. Some people can “see” things in the spirit that the rest of us cannot. These are gifts from the Lord. Some of you don't believe in these gifts from God. You are what is referred to as cessationists. You believe that these gifts ceased after the Apostles were gone. I believe that these gifts are still in play today. I have good reason to hold to these beliefs, for I have seen them and experienced them first hand. I am what is referred to as a continuationist.

Cessationists, Continuationist, what ever you call it, one is not more saved than another. I won't call you down for not believing in speaking of tongues, or praying in the Spirit. You just are not experiencing the glory of God as fully as you might otherwise. It is like going to a gourmet restaurant and ordering a massive chicken fried steak, hash browns smothered in cheese and fried onions, and Mama's secret white gravy (Not to tell you that as I speak, my wife is cooking a similar meal, yum!). But when the meal comes you eat only the small salad. You still had a meal, you merely ate the rabbit food and left the rest. Some people are happy with the salad. That is OK. But...the WHOLE meal was paid for and it is a shame to let it go to waste.

The next and final type of person is the “special forces” Christians. These “special forces” Christians as I call them are not entirely different than the infantry. If you look at your typical infantry and your typical special forces soldiers you will find that both are very fit. Both are very intelligent and determined. The difference in the two is generally mostly in confidence and need to push themselves to the limit. Our “special forces” Christians are those who, in the words of President John F. Kennedy, are: “Tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today, at home, and around the world. Whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to ensure the survival and the success of liberty.” Powerful words. They are true, for these same virtues are used to serve our Lord too. He went on to talk of unity and the importance of standing together against evil. In a moment I will talk about that.

Our “special forces” Christians are sometimes hard to spot, in fact they are hard to see much of the time. You see they do not seek laurels or praise for their service. They are those that no matter how hard it gets they don't get down in the dumps. They don't let their circumstances slow their walk with Christ. They are not just your evangelists although many are. They are your quiet warriors walking through hospitals praying for the sick, not because it is expected of them, but because they have a honest desire to see the glory of God revealed. Many of us pray, many of us even preach, because we feel it is expected of us. God says to pray for the sick, so we pray. God says to preach to the unsaved, so we preach. God commands us to care for the widows and we do. And we should. That is not bad and I am not speaking against it. But those “special forces” Christians do this because they want to. We are there from time to time. But when was the last time I went to a hospital to pray for the sick? Why did I go? Why did I not?

I have news for you, and many pentecostal and charismatic believers will disagree with me. Many of those “special forces” Christians are patients in these hospitals. I once heard a message on the healing power of God from a pastor named David Kaufman of the Holy Life Tabernacle in Brookings South Dakota. I will put a link on the site for them. It was part of a series on healing and he was speaking of a girl who was in a wheelchair. And a fellow had made a comment that alluded to the sentiment that if she had faith she would “rise up and walk.” Pastor Kaufman rightly said to that man that he could not pray his way out of a cold and that it was hypocritical of him to comment.

This is not saying that it is not possible, this is merely pointing out that God's ways are above our ways. Sometimes we are given struggles and limitations by God. We generally like to think that whatever good happens, comes from God (it does!) and whatever bad things that happen, come from the devil (Many do!). Well it may come from the devil but the devil cannot do anything without permission from God. Please keep this in context because it is important. God will use circumstances to draw us closer to Him. So “bad” things will happen. My second point is this. We forget that our life here is not merely to keep breathing. It is for us to grow. “Bad things” are only from our perspective. Sure cancer is awful and painful. But it lasts how long? Long to us and definitely would fit my definition of “bad.” But how long is eternity?

My son loves his guitar. He is getting really good at it and I am proud of him. I want nothing but to let him play on his guitar. I want him to have fun. But if he does not do his school work or his chores he will be grounded off that instrument. I don't want to. But I will discipline him and take his privileges until he decides to be obedient and fulfill his obligations. I

know that it is important for him to have a good work ethic and if it takes hurting his feelings a little by depriving him of what he enjoys to do, he will be better off for it. I look at the big picture. How does it look to him? He sees me as mean, vindictive, punitive, and unreasonable. That guitar is much more important than one math worksheet or picking up the living room floor. That is his perspective. Whose perspective is more important to maintain in our house?

It is the same for us Christians. We see bad things happen and we say that is the devil because God is good. God is good. He is a good father and a good father will discipline His children. God says so. A good father does not give his children over for somebody else to discipline.

Our "special forces" Christians understand this. I was told just the other night that it was a bit bothersome to see a three hundred pound preacher with glasses and high blood pressure preaching on the power of God. Now I understand what he is talking about but I disagree partly. I am three hundred pounds and I preached. But I don't wear glasses and I was healed of high blood pressure. I have not taken my medication for over a year now and my numbers are normal, higher normal but still normal for my age. Praise God! Sometimes our afflictions are caused by our own sin. I like to eat and it is a constant struggle not to raid the fridge. Guilty. Could not high blood pressure be a warning from my Lord that I need to change my lifestyle? Could my aching feet be a sign from God that I am not walking the walk He has destined for me to tread?

My sister went home to be with the Lord in February of 2012. She had a debilitating neurological disease. It took her speech. It took her ability to eat. She could not walk. In the end she could only move her head side to side and her right hand minutely. She was in more pain than I have ever known was even possible for a person to be in. Picture a charlie horse, except that it never eased and affected your entire body. She never gave up though. Through the ten years that she suffered, she never in my presence complained. Ever. I reflect on it now and she was stronger than the family that surrounded her. She gave me hope and a new perspective. She showed me what was truly important and I learned more from her experience than I have, in many ways, from my own. I am not the only one to express this either. What she went through would have crushed me. I was a pastor, unofficial of course, but I considered myself one nonetheless. After all I had a congregation to look after. If you have sheep you are a shepherd. But I did not have the faith to have endured what she did. It was a shock to me. Sure she died. But she left an impression on a vast number of people. The people at her home where she lived, the people at the hospital, at the hospice, her family, friends; so many saw her and were encouraged. It took much of my fear of death from me. I have often said. I do not

fear death. It is the getting there that bothers me.

She was (is!) a “special forces” Christian. These are what we all want to be. But are we willing to sacrifice and exhibit the determination to get there? Your Navy SEALs, your Delta Force, Green Berets, Rangers, Recon Marines, what differentiates them from your run of the mill infantry? I have heard it said that ninety percent of the SEAL BUDS training is mental. They want it bad enough that they will push to get it beyond what is strictly necessary. They will accept nothing less than victory. For that is what we have in Christ. Victory. There is nothing wrong or dishonorable about regular infantry, or cooks, or truck drivers. They are needed. They guard the home-front.

Marcus Luttrell wrote in his book *Lone Survivor* about his experiences in Afghanistan. He and his three fellow Navy SEALs were surrounded by seventy to one hundred fifty Taliban fighters and they never once lost their confidence that they would prevail. They never faltered. They died; all but Mr. Luttrell. But they did not lose. Victory is more than the survival of the body. Too many Christians forget that. I recommend a sermon from Dr. David Gibbs Jr. called “Preference or Conviction”. It is an eye opener.

There are some that the anointing of God is stronger on. Some people are stronger than others. I like shooting. I am a fair shot with a .22. I can hold my own with a rifle. I am dismal with pistols and Shotguns past about five feet. I don't think I could compete nationally. That is no shame on me. The competitive shooters that compete nationally are among the top one percent. They pushed themselves to get there. If you want to get there in your spiritual walk with the Lord, you have to push and push hard. You have to do more than just want it, you have to want it bad enough that you will do what it takes to get it. Whatever it takes.

So in conclusion I want to revisit John F. Kennedy's speech once more. He said “United there is little we cannot do. In a host of (cooperative?)¹⁵ interests, divided there is little we can do. And to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power, by riding the back of the tiger, ended up inside.” We have to remember that we are one Church, one body. This entire message can be summed up with this notion. In America and around the world I think that the Body of Christ has forgotten its enemy. We instead have turned our attentions towards our fellow Christians. I do not appreciate the value of denominations. It divides us; makes us weaker. Division has cost us our God given morals and purpose. We can change this. We are a body. If a finger touches something hot, the arm yanks it back. That is why we feel pain. Pain is not bad. It feels bad but it tells us something is wrong. It is the same for spiritual and

¹⁵ Difficulty in hearing—parenthesis mine.

emotional pain. We as a Church, the Church must pull back from this precipice.

Thank you for visiting our site, and may God bless you richly.

Luke Warsech